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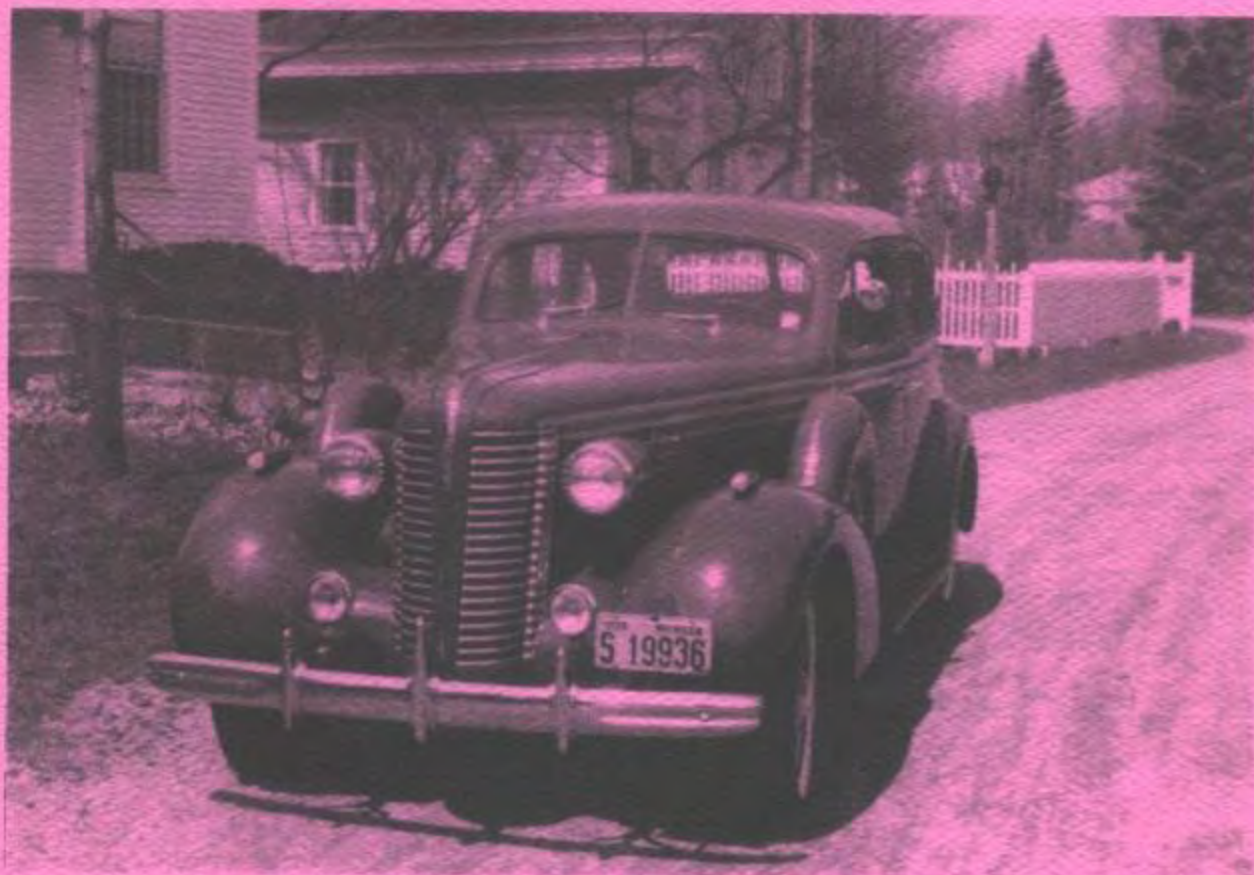
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# THE TORQUE•TUBE

THE NEWS PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS

OF THE 1937-1938 BUICK CLUB • FOUNDED 1980



**Volume VIII • Number 8**





# THE TORQUE·TUBE

THE NEWS PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE 1937-1938 BUICK CLUB • FOUNDED 1980



VOL. VIII, NO. 8    ★    JUNE 1990

• William E. Olson, Editor •

• 842 Mission Hills Lane, Columbus, Ohio 43235 •

## ● Club News ●

### TINKERING WITH GASOLINE

The United States, in my opinion, is in for trouble, and, while every citizen will get his share, the old car hobbyist may well get a heavier dose. The threat does not come from Japan, at least not yet; it comes from within. For some time now we as a nation have been tinkering dangerously with the fabric of our society and the structure of our economy, mostly on the basis of nothing more substantial than myths, symbols, and buzzwords, and their insidious handmaidens, the public opinion polls. We have tried to suppress that which does not require suppression, to redress, legislatively, perceived evils that have existed since the beginning of recorded history, to regulate that which needs no more regulation, and to deregulate that which was appropriately regulated before, all in the name of somehow bringing in the Millenium by the day after tomorrow.

A great deal could be written about this, but I will undertake only a few paragraphs.

A prime example of ill-considered tinkering, in my view, is the so-called Clean Air Act of 1990, which will be law in close to its present form by year-end. This massive statute, some 750 pages long and rivalling the Internal Revenue Code in complexity, might better be called an Act for the Bringing On of Economic Recession, for the Encouragement of Litigation, and for the Enrichment of a Small Cadre of Attorneys. Among the things it brings us in its bag of Cures for Problems That Have Never Actually Been Shown to Exist is the notion of "reformulated gasoline," another buzzword, and the automobile's equivalent of the meaningless "all natural" on food products.

I do not know at present what reformulated gasoline is going to be, but you can be sure it will be something different from what we have now. Whether or to what extent that difference will further impact the driveability of older cars remains to be seen.



*Founded by Dave Lewis in 1980*





## COVER CAR

A very handsome 1938 Special owned by Mark Cryderman (#812) of Northville, Michigan is shown at Mill Race Historical Village in Northville. Instead of the "BUICK 8" monogram often seen on '38s with the "horseshoe" grille guard, this car has a "sharktooth" guard, which was also a "factory" accessory. You may wish to note that the car does not have wheel stripes, that the entire tail light housings are plated, and that there is an outside mast antenna, all of which are small deviations from "dealer showroom" authenticity. Back-up lights were available in 1939, and quite possibly before, and I would not "gig" the light. It appears from the photo that the steering wheel rim is a dark color: maroon plastic was used on some late-production '38 Specials.

In the "debates" (i.e. political maneuverings) in Congress, certain Senators and Representatives have pushed for a legally-mandated addition of ethanol (grain alcohol) to motor fuel. Which states do you think these wise legislators represent? If you guessed the Midwest and the Great Plains, where farmers are already growing more grains than the U.S. can eat and are perpetually complaining that prices are too low, you got it right. Such is the manner in which American Government frequently treats complex, highly technical, and very serious subjects.

Modern refineries are incredibly complex installations, and the process of making gasoline literally involves the taking apart of molecules in crude petroleum and restructuring them. Among the compounds produced in this restructuring are so-called "aromatics." When lead was ordered out, the content of aromatics in gasoline was increased because they increase "octane rating." Some super-unleaded blends may have as much as 50% aromatics. Before the beginning of the lead phase-out in the 1970's, gasoline was about





20% aromatics, and was back in the 1930's probably much less. However, it is now claimed that aromatics cause "smog", so away they must go also. What gets substituted will, another ten or fifteen years down the road, in all likelihood be found to have its own allegedly terrible effects, and we will be off on another tinkering adventure. What is certain is that all of this will be expensive: Amoco estimates the cost of producing reformulated gasoline, including financing the capital investment necessary to alter refineries, at \$15 billion per year; ARCO says \$25 billion. (New York Times, May 22, 1990.)

What will reformulated gasoline have in it? Ethanol? Methanol? Something else? Will 50-year-old cars run on reformulated gasoline? I guess that, sooner or later, we'll find out. Tinkering was fine when it brought us the cotton gin and the repeating rifle. Now we've gone way beyond that, and we're trying to tinker our way into a risk-free society. There ain't no such thing. Remember Olson's Law of the Conservation of Shit: shit (i.e. noxious matter) may be transformed from one state into another, but it can never be eliminated. If we could figure out the state that confines damage to a level everyone would consider acceptable, and then stick with it, that would be fine. It will never happen.

### **ZONING REGULATION**

Several issues back, in "Another Harangue", we briefly considered the impact of zoning regulation on the car collector or restorer, and the need for lobbying efforts by the antique car hobby. Both of these concerns are treated in an excellent article by Matt Joseph in the June issue of Skinned Knuckles.

Those of you who are not familiar with Skinned Knuckles and Mr. Joseph's writings ought to be. The magazine is the best antique car publication there is — yes, better than this one. It devotes exactly zero space to auctions, other forms of phoney-baloney, unresearched drivel and flashy color pix of cars we can't afford. Instead, it's full of practical, meaty, helpful information and well-thought-out opinion and advice. Matt Joseph, a one-time college professor turned professional car restorer, is the most sensible, intelligent, rational, and readable writer on antique car subjects going, and an articulate spokesman for the hobby. (The cost of Skinned Knuckles is surprisingly modest: \$14 for one year. Write to 175 May Avenue, Monrovia, CA 91016.)

Besides treating the subject of conflict between zoning and car collecting in a highly practical and intelligent manner (and perhaps somewhat more temperately than I treated it), the article informs us that a few states currently do have statewide associations of car clubs, whose purpose is to monitor legislation and guide it away from damaging us. (I was not aware of the existence of these organizations when I wrote the article in Issue 3 urging their formation.) About the Association of California Car Clubs, Matt Joseph says: "ACCC deserves particular credit because from what I have seen of it and heard about it, it is everything this kind of organization should be. ...Its publication, deFender, is top notch, and the record of ACCC in influencing legislation at many levels in California has been exemplary."

I would like some of our California members to find out more about ACCC, how it was initially organized, who its officers are, and how it operates, and let me know. At a minimum, I'd like a few issues of its publication. California's experience can serve as a model for other states.

If you would like a copy of the Matt Joseph article, send a SASE (9 1/2 x 4 1/8 please) to the Editor.



#### BCA NATIONAL MEET — JUNE 6-10

The following members won awards at the BCA National:

- |           |        |                                            |
|-----------|--------|--------------------------------------------|
| Class C-1 | First  | - Randy Dozier, 1937 66-C                  |
|           | Second | - Gary Gearhart, 1937 61                   |
|           | Third  | - Dave Brady, 1937 60-C<br>(former member) |
| Class C-2 | Second | - O. J. Misjuns, 1938 47                   |
|           | Third  | - Marv Rhynard, 1938 61                    |

In addition John Huffman, whose '37 Roadmaster is still in pieces, won a Second in Class D-1 with his 1940 Super coupe. There will be some photos in the next issue. Marv Rhynard's car suffered a major breakdown as he and Phyllis were leaving Sunday morning. I tried to get some help for him from the "officials" of the Host Chapter, but they apparently were too busy, and had no emergency service plan, as we have always had at meets in Columbus. Fortunately, Lou Wildt, (#245) who lives in the Cincinnati area, was able to bring over his trailer and rescue Marv's car, which Lou stored until Marv was able to arrange for its transport back to Michigan. I am taking this opportunity to publicly thank Lou for his generosity.



## BCA JUDGING

Your Editor again served as a Deputy Chief Judge at this year's BCA National, for Class C and D (1936-1941). I was teamed with Bruce Kile, whom many of you doubtless know, or have heard about, or heard. Bruce, sometimes known as The Mouth of the South, behaved with temperance and good humor, and contributed valuable knowledge of 1936 cars, which I am a bit thin on. I got hung up on trying to figure out what to do about a 1938 Century with a woody station wagon body, very skillfully made but plainly not original. The owner claimed the car originally had a Fisher woody body, one of three made, but could not document that. We ended up giving him benefit of doubt rather than deducting 30 or 40 points for "no such body", and in the end it didn't matter as he didn't place anyway.

The woody was extremely interesting, as was Nelson Jones' (#611) "modified" '38 Roadmaster. ("Modified" means "street rod"). The Jones-mobile is one of the nicer street rods I have seen, and looks original from the outside except for dark red paint and "mag" wheels. (That is, not a Kool Kalifornia Kustom chop-and-channel job.) The car generated an unusual question from my wife, who overheard some people looking it over. "They said it has 400 gerbils in it," she said to me, "what are they talking about?" Well, it turns out that the lookers were speculating about the car's transmission, and it was "400 Turbo", not gerbils. (Can you imagine 400 little rodents in 400 little exercise cages under the hood, poised to power a 4,000-pound car at 10 pounds per rodent?) In fact, the Roadmaster has a 350 V-8 and a 350 Turbo, and, of course, a few running gear modifications.

There was a special class for "modified" cars, and this of course generated some controversy, as some conservative BCA members don't think "rods" should even be allowed in the gate. The "modifieds" were interesting to me, however, and fun to look at, and were all very expertly done. With one possible exception, they were quite conservative, as such vehicles go. (The exception was a "boat-tail" Riviera, which I saw only fleetingly, but long enough to decide I wouldn't be seen dead in it. Some people of course think "boat-tails" can't be modified enough, so there would necessarily be differences of view about that car.) The treatment of "modifieds" this year was, I think, a good compromise: one separate class for all of them, irrespective of year-of-origin, with one set of first, second and third places.

In addition to "modifieds", there should, I believe, be a seaprte class for "historical customs": i.e. cars such as the '38 woody, the '31 "beach wagon" we saw last year, the Brunn and Brewster town cars, the "Buburn" (1/2 '37 Buick, 1/2 boat-tail Auburn), the English "drop-heads", and similar cars that were custom-bodied when new. That would have saved me a bit of headache trying to figure out how to judge the woody. I will bring this up with the BCA Judging Committee.

That brings me to the concluding part of this entry. During the past winter, I brought up with Mac Blair, BCA Chief Judge, various things I thought might be considered to improve the then-new and still-pretty-young 400-point "formal" judging format. My reward for this meddlesome behavior was predictable: I am now a member of the BCA National Judging Committee. Actually, I consider this something of an honor, and am committed to trying to refine the system and its implementation as much as may be possible. If any of you have any thoughtful comment about BCA judging, I would like to hear it. "Thoughtful comment" does not include "I wuz robbed!", "They oughta scrap the whole freakin' thing", "Joe Blow shouldn'ta won 'cause he's an asshole", and the like. The system is not going to be scrapped, and neither it nor any other judging format can guarantee 100% satisfaction, but it can certainly be improved, and no Committee member will (or should) deny that.



## SPEECHLESS, AT LAST

I now know why a number of people pressed me to hold a Club meeting at the BCA National Meet. Since the meetings have in the past been primarily social, and the lounge at the Kings Island Inn did not seem large enough, I came close to cancelling it, but decided not to because so many members seemed to really want one. We ended up holding the meeting in an indoor swap space recently vacated by some of my friends from Columbus.

Temporarily tired of being in charge of things, I turned the meeting over to our Official Blithe Spirit, Clarence Hoffman (#546), for what I thought would be a few outrageous jokes. "Huffy," however, immediately brought on Rick Wilson (#539), who presented me with a package on behalf of the membership. I assumed this was a gag until I opened it and found a large and beautiful plaque and a gold reproduction of a 1937 Buick ignition key.

As I assume most of you know, Rick sent a letter to everyone whose name appears in the 1989 Roster (except me), asking for a contribution of \$1.00 toward this presentation. Rick, who is a certified dental laboratory technician, cast the gold key himself, and had the plaque made by a trophy business.

After all this was done, there was a considerable sum of money left over, and I was given a cashier's check to the Club in the amount of \$486.74, plus \$39.00 in cash. I deposited the check in the Club's account, but, to be perfectly candid about things, I kept the \$39.00. The extra money can be used to defray any expenses of this year's Club meets not covered by the registration fees.

Obviously, many people contributed more than \$1.00. Many also sent letters praising my efforts (and Rick's efforts as well) in various ways. A file of this correspondence was turned over to me, but I found it too embarrassing to read, and gave it to my wife.

This was a complete surprise, and I was, to coin a phrase, for once in my life speechless. All I could do was mumble a few "thank you's." I will tell you now that I sincerely appreciate being thus honored, and I am grateful for your support and kindness. I have enjoyed putting out this publication, have learned a lot in so doing, and have made friends literally throughout the world. (Looking at it selfishly, I can say that there are now 400 of you out there, each of whom owes me a favor; in a couple of cases I have collected on the favors, and found the "collectees" very willing to help me out.) So, I believe that you have conferred a greater benefit upon me than I have upon you.

The main text of the plaque was the creation of Ray Vanyek (#173). It reads as follows:

"A very SPECIAL person — probably only one like him comes along each CENTURY. As we drive down the highway of life we realize how rare it is to encounter one we look to as a pathfinder, a trailblazer, a travel guide or even a ROADMASTER. Truly there are individuals with this sensitive, creative talent but they are rare and their numbers are LIMITED. Bill Olson is one of these extraordinary individuals and a gift to all 1937-1938 BUICK enthusiasts.

OUR HUMBLE THANKS AND SINCERE APPRECIATION FROM THE MEMBERSHIP."

Clever, huh? The way they worked in the names of the four Buick series? I wouldn't have chosen all those adjectives myself, and to me the thing sounds dangerously like a eulogy. Indeed, I doubt I'll get an epitaph that glowing when the time comes to take an exit ramp off "the highway of life."



Some of the letters contained wisecracks. The authors of these have been duly identified, and will be later paid back.

And finally, to any of you who received Rick Wilson's letter and did not contribute even ONE LOUSY BUCK to this Worthiest of All Causes: you are a KNAVE, "a rascally yea-forsooth knave,"\* an INGRATE, "marble-hearted fiend...more hideous than the sea-monster"\*\*, and all the names set forth in Section 986.6 of Roget's Thesaurus, and had best reform your ways forthwith.

—Bill

#### REMINDER: EASTERN CLUB MEET

Don't forget the Eastern Club Meet to be held at the Days Inn in Hanover, Maryland on August 17 and 18. Call David Bylsma (#117) for more information: 301/551-7236 after 5 PM. Call the hotel for reservations: 301/684-3388.

A Western Club Meet to be held October 6 and 7 in Santa Maria, California is still in the planning stage. More info on this soon.



### NEW MEMBERS



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Lake Lotawana, MO 64063  
816/774-3438  
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Harold Drake (#837)  
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805/497-1742  
'37 81

Daniel A. Murtz (#835)  
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'38 41

Bruce Barrett (#836)  
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Missoula, MT 59801  
406/542-2563  
'37 90

Lawrence W. Moon (#838)  
497 Seaport Ct., #101  
Port of Redwood City, CA  
94063  
'37 41

\*King Henry IV, Part II: Act I, sc. 2.

\*\*King Lear: Act I, sc. 4.

*"Return with us now..."*



## **Garage Sale Goodies**

**BY MIKE VOSGANIAN (#447) — WOODLAND HILLS, CA**

Most of the garage sales I have attended rarely have had automotive-related tools, parts, or memorabilia, but they are at least worth a try. Just a few minutes to stop and look can bring great pleasure if you find a unique treasure.

At one particular sale this past summer I found among the furniture and assorted junk a large stack of old, even antique photos. It was amazing and a little sad how little these remembrances meant to the ever-smiling and friendly sellers. They had put up for sale what should have been family heirlooms. The photos and portraits represented several generations up to the 1940's. Mixed in was even a great-grandmother's marriage license dated 1869.

As I was looking through the pile of pictures the seller asked what in particular I was searching for. I casually said pictures with old cars in them. I even jokingly specified 1938 Buicks, like mine at home. He encouraged me to continue looking, as he remembered a few pictures with cars in them. Shortly thereafter I did in fact turn up several photos with a 1938 Buick in them. I am enclosing these pictures so that you can enjoy them too. The actual pictures are small but the details are sharp and I enjoyed researching them with a magnifying glass. One shot is a portrait solely of the car nicely centered - not like the shots I have taken where, after developing, the pictures show a "cut-off" version. Even the word Special can clearly be read on the hood. Although the pictures are in black and white, the car's image appears light enough to suggest a color other than black: perhaps grey.





What I believe to be the same car is shown in two other pictures taken in sequence. One shows a couple standing by a power pole, with a 1938 Buick parked in front of Badger Lumber Company. The other is a closer look. In this picture note the largest rear bumper center guard I have ever seen. It looks similar to the front center guards we are all familiar with. At the top of this rear guard there sits what appears to be a badge or reflector.



With the above photos were one other photo and two photo postcards. The photo shows a TWA DC-3 at Kansas City Airport marked "The Lindbergh Line". The photo postcards are face marked "Belleville, Kansas 1940". One shows a Rexall Drug store, a '30's car flying over the cobblestone street, and a corner store with "Tires and Tubes" painted on one of the smaller windows. Christmas Decorations are draped between the street lights, too. And last take a look at the Elliott Hotel. It can't be all bad. Someone parked a 1938 Buick next to it on the right.

With the help of these pictures I can imagine how things were back then, in Kansas. But I also wonder how things are now. Does the Elliott Hotel still stand? Is the Rexall still there? Good luck at the next garage sale!



## ***SCREWING IT UP... or, TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION***

By Don Michelletti (#250)

Our Editor's experience with his car reminds me of my experience with my '38-46. This is one of those long, sad stories. It will sound unbelievable but it is true.



My first '38 coupe was a business coupe I bought in 1971. It had been hit very hard in the rear - actually a total, but I figured I could fix it. While looking for parts to "fix her up" I ran into a guy with what was to become my second '38-46. At that time he was "restoring" the car. He told me he had completely rebuilt the engine, transmission, rear end and brakes. A really good job.

We sort of kept in touch. After about a year, he called me. He said he was disgusted with the car and offered it to me for a price which was a give-away - less than he paid for parts. Obviously, I accepted.

He told me the car would not move: everything was locked up. He said the rear end was blown and the transmission was frozen. The only way the car would move (and then only barely) was if you held in the clutch, but as the brakes wouldn't work, it was probably just as well.

The story goes: After the "restorer" had reassembled all the "rebuilt" running gear, he tried to start the engine but it wouldn't turn with the starter. He then tried to push the car - no luck. Finally he tried to start the engine by towing the car and popping the clutch. The engine still would not turn, then something let go in the rear end and the transmission froze in second gear. I think I'd be disgusted too.

I bought the car, trailered it home, and started to try to figure out all the problems. Yes, the rear end had blown. When I opened it up I found he had "rebuilt" the differential but hadn't replaced the retainers which hold the carrier adjusting rings in position. They unscrewed and lunched the gears. Also, there was no oil in the differential! Problem number one explained.

Next the transmission: When I got it out indeed it was frozen in second. No oil here either. Because of all the towing the second gear idler welded itself to the output shaft. Problem number two explained.

Then I figured I'd look into the brakes. When I removed the drums I found new linings but the drums were badly scored and had not been turned. However, the real problem was with the cylinders. He cleaned them, but because he couldn't find the right size rebuild kits he put in the next size larger rubber cups in the wheel cylinders. Honest! I didn't think this was even possible.

Next was the engine. Here I also found a nightmare. Yes, it had been rebored and had new pistons. The rods had been rebabbited, etc. However, the reassembly was not to be believed!

He had never worked on an old engine and didn't know what the shims were for - so he left them out. He just bolted everything up tight - no wonder the engine wouldn't turn!

I have to say the body was perfect. Not a speck of rust - but then he didn't work on that.

I know this is very hard to believe but I swear it is all true! Even more unbelievable: this guy was a "mechanic" at a gas station!

So much for "professional" mechanics and restorations.





# TECHNICAL TIPS



## NEW PRODUCT BLUES

By Roy W. Schmidt (#673) — Lincoln, Nebraska

I have several interesting vehicles in my storage barn. The question visitors most commonly ask is: do you drive these cars in parades? The answer is: no, I don't; they are not ready. The real truth is, however, that something is always wrong, and most of what's wrong seems to be a function of modern products, not the vehicles themselves.

I wonder if I am the only one having these problems.

### I. Gas Tank Sealers

The most recent one has to do with fuel tank linings. For a long time, the problem with my 1926 Studebaker appeared to be the vacuum tank. Sometimes it would work, and then again it wouldn't. I finally decided to install an electric fuel pump. This worked fine the first time I started the car, to load it on a trailer to haul to a show. And everything worked fine when I unloaded the car and drove into the show building, even though the outside air temperature was in the range of five degrees. Coming out, however, was a different story: I could not keep the car running, and finally had to push it on to the trailer by hand.

I looked into the gas tank, and what did I see: a lot of suspended gunk floating in the tank. This tank had been "Redi-Stripped" ten years ago, sealed with a popular brand of sealer, and drained most winters. The car had been driven about 150 miles in that ten-year period. I called the supplier of the tank sealer, and they were happy to send another can at no cost, but told me not to use any more ethanol-blended fuel. It's hard to buy straight gas here in Nebraska. After rinsing the tank with gas and attempting to use the old rock and chain cleaning system, neither of which seemed to do much good, I poured in the new sealer, only to have it curdle in the tank. Again I called the supplier on the East Coast, and again they sent me a free can of sealer, stating that they did not know what had happened, and that I should first clean the tank with MEK. (Editor's Note: I assume "MEK" is methyl ethyl ketone, a powerful solvent.) This time the supplier sent an ethanol-compatible sealer. I did all this and everything seemed fine. However, it's now two months later and I haven't put gas in the car. I guess I'm afraid to take the car out. Wouldn't you be?

### II. Silicone Brake Fluid

Another problem product, at least for me, is silicone brake fluid. There seem to me to be a number of reasons to stay with glycol-based fluids despite their corrosive nature and their affinity for moisture. Silicone fluid, at least the product I've used, appears to have a lot more air dissolved in it, and because of the compressible nature of the air, hydraulic systems which used most of their pedal travel with glycol fluid may be inadequate with silicone. This happened with my 1953 TVR, an English sports car, which has a hydraulic clutch. The clutch would never quite disengage with silicone fluid in the system, but a draining, flushing and return to regular fluid seems to have cured the problem.



On another vehicle — a '48 Diamond T pickup — the problem is leaking brake cylinders. The truck had a total rebuild six or seven years ago, but I've kept it in the barn, except for maybe ten miles of use, because every time I go to crank it up there's no brakes. I pulled the wheels and found the wheel cylinder cups swollen as much as .50 to .70. Reading articles in other publications, I learned that swelling agents are added to silicone fluids to assure cup seals. These agents are apparently compatible only with the newer "EPDM" rubber, and I have not been able to determine whether or not anything I have on the shelf or might buy today is made of the new rubber or not. The brake parts on the truck were purchased seven years ago, and they have swollen too much and become too soft to seal properly. The bottom line is, I will have to drain and flush the system, install new kits and refill with the old tried and true glycol-type fluid.

### EDITOR'S COMMENT ON PROBLEM PRODUCTS

We have discussed both gas tank sealers and brake fluids more than once in the past, but these subjects probably merit repeated treatment.

As I have said before, the problem, in my opinion, with modern gasoline is not in what has been taken away — tetraethyl lead — but in what has or may have been added. Perhaps the most troublesome addition is alcohol. Two forms of alcohol have been used in gasoline: ethanol, or "grain alcohol"; and methanol, sometimes called "wood alcohol." The latter was snuck into a number of "off-brand" and "local brand" gasolines a few years ago in Ohio and other states and caused tremendous problems even in modern cars. It is highly poisonous and corrosive and attacks even neoprene rubber. The refiners and wholesalers who did this were caught and there was a big stink about it. So far as I know, methanol has pretty much disappeared from gas. Ethanol is essentially the same stuff that distinguishes beer, wine and spirits from other beverages. It is one of the Conventional Wisdoms that up to 10% ethanol can be added to gasoline with no ill effects on driveability in modern cars, and most owner's manuals so state. (Some manufacturers (e.g., VW - Audi), however, discourage use of ethanol-blend fuels.) In the recent "debates" and hearings before the Congress on the latest version of Bringing in the Environmental Millennium — i.e. the proposed Clean Air Act of 1990 — expanded use of ethanol was advocated as a cure for the alleged polluting effects of petroleum-based gasoline, and some people continue to talk (or scream and yell) about cars that will run on 100% ethanol.

To me, such a prospect is alarming, even disregarding the impact of ethanol-blend fuels on antique cars. I do not like ethanol, and am highly dubious about its use as motor fuel. In the company-fleet vehicle my employer has generously provided for my use are two credit cards, and unless I want to disregard free gasoline I must choose either Sohio (BP America) or Union 76, now sometimes called Unocal. Some time ago, I discovered that the Union 76 sold in central Ohio has ethanol in it. It seems that every time I fill up with this stuff, the car misbehaves in some way or other, or some sensor or other modern mystery part goes haywire. This may be pure coincidence, but I have become sufficiently disillusioned with Union 76 that I stick to Sohio — no great shakes as a gasoline either — except in emergency situations. What other cars do with ethanol-blend fuels I don't know, having had no occasion to try to find out.\*

We have strayed from the subject at hand. All or most gas tank sealers sold until three or four years ago will be attacked and eventually dissolved into gunky fuel-line-clogging matter by ethanol. If, as Roy Schmidt did, you sealed an old tank several years ago, or you are otherwise not certain what kind of sealer is in your tank, you must — REPEAT, MUST — avoid ethanol-blend fuel at all costs.

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\*The company car is that triumph of American technology, the Plymouth Reliant, or "K-Car." Its only virtue, as far as I am concerned, other than being furnished and serviced without cost to me, is that it is more comfortable than the other company car, the Chevrolet Corsica, which produces severe pain in the lower back, knees, and butt after 15-20 minutes.

Most suppliers of tank sealers, including Bill Hirsch (who may be the most popular source), now offer an alcohol-resistant product in addition to the old-style sealer. The former is slightly more expensive but well worth the extra money.

How does one know which fuels have ethanol in them? That is a good question, but one that cannot be answered completely. Some states, including Ohio, require that gas pumps be labelled to indicate the presence, or potential presence, of ethanol in the fuel. Unfortunately, these labels are quite small and may be overlooked: observe the pump carefully and thoroughly. Find out if your state requires such labelling. If you don't know how to find out, call your State Representative's office and ask them to find out, or pester someone else. If your state does not require disclosure, you have a problem, but you can minimize risk by sticking with major name brands. If you want to eliminate risk, take the tank out of your car, boil it out and re-seal it with alcohol-resistant sealer. Hirsch's products have a good reputation, but those sold by other well-known suppliers are in all probability equally good. The content of all gasolines may vary from time to time, and no refiner has total control over what comes out of the pumps of its retailers.

Silicone brake fluid remains controversial, and the burden of all that I have heard and read seems to be what Roy Schmidt says: it is compatible only with new, recently-manufactured rubber parts. (The chief virtue of silicone fluid, for those of you that may be new to the subject, is that it does not have the glycol fluid's affinity for water. Regular brake fluid will attract and combine with even minute amounts of water, and over time this affinity can cause trouble in cars that are infrequently driven, or stored in humid locations. Regular brake fluid is also somewhat corrosive, as you know if you have observed what it does to paint. Silicone fluid is not.) Moreover, if you want to change to silicone fluid, the system must be thoroughly flushed so that the old fluid is removed completely.

Some people swear by silicone fluid. I used it in the '37 Special I had at one time, but it went into the car with all new (not NOS) wheel cylinders, master cylinder rubber, and hoses purchased from NAPA. I had no trouble with this. I put silicone fluid into my '37 Roadmaster, but then forgot that I'd done so, and later added regular fluid. This is a no-no. When I realized what I'd done, I had the whole system purged and went back to regular fluid, largely because the car does not have all new rubber in it. In addition to the leaks that swelling of rubber parts can cause, interior swelling of the rear brake hose can block fluid return, causing the rear brakes to drag. This is exacerbated by hot weather.

Roy Schmidt's speculation about air being dissolved in silicone fluid does not correctly explain his hydraulic clutch problem. Gases are compressible; liquids are relatively incompressible, and that is why hydraulic systems work. Dissolving a gas in a liquid does not alter the incompressibility of that liquid. If, however, some "bubbles" of undissolved gas remain in an enclosed liquid, when pressure is applied the undissolved gas will compress. This is as true of regular brake fluid as of silicone fluid, and explains why "air in the lines" is the stated cause of "spongy pedal" in all the brake system trouble-shooting guides. The remedy for "spongy pedal" is to bleed the system until all air bubbles are removed. Undissolved air bubbles could well have been the cause of Roy's clutch problem, but that kind of problem is not unique to silicone fluid.

Based upon everything I have read and heard, I would advise against using silicone fluid unless you install all new (not NOS) rubber in your brake system at the same time. Indeed, I would advise against using any NOS brake system rubber parts of indeterminate age unless you have no choice. If you use regular (DOT 3 or DOT 4) fluid, it is a very good idea to purge the entire system, adding all new fluid, once every year or two unless you live in a very dry climate.



## MODERN BRAKE PARTS

How do you put new rubber into your brake systems? For series 80 and 90 cars you probably can't, but here is a little list of modern parts that are relatively easy to obtain.

### 40 and 60 Series Cars

Wheel Cylinders:	Front - NAPA 7536, 7537 Rear - NAPA 7563, 7564
Wheel Cylinder Kits:	Front - NAPA 35 Rear - NAPA 21
Master Cylinder Kit:	NAPA 3
Front Hose:	NAPA 4497; R/M BH 7600
Rear Hose:	NAPA 35019; R/M BH 6100

The rear hose will also work on 80 and 90 series cars to replace the hose that runs from the distributor fitting to the rear steel line on the torque tube. For 60, 80, and 90 series cars that have 7/16 - 20 fittings on the hose that runs from the master cylinder to the distributor fitting, that hose can be replaced by NAPA 36804, although this is too long and must be looped. Some 80 and 90 series cars have 1/2" fittings on this line, and this is a problem unless one finds substitute 7/16" fittings, because there are — apparently — no modern hoses with 1/2" fittings. In such a case, some bastardization may be necessary, and one may need to seek the help of a shop that does hydraulic systems repair. In repair of 80 and 90 series master cylinders, the rubber, but not the piston, from a '52 Chevrolet truck kit will work.

## COOLING SYSTEMS - III

In Issue 6 we indulged some speculation about the cause of "mystery" overheating at speed. As you may recall, this malady affects some (probably relatively few) cars, which run at acceptable temperature under low-speed "drive around the neighborhood" conditions, but begin to overheat at highway speeds.

My friend and engine rebuilder Ed Hunkins and I were discussing this (among other subjects) a while ago. Ed, whose judgment and experience I value highly, suggested that the cause of this condition is not in the cooling system components at all, but rather in leakage of combustion gas into the coolant. Such leakage can result from a cracked head or block, or a leaky head gasket. These defects sometimes show themselves by the formation of whitish or yellowish goo inside the rocker arm cover, the oil filler cap, or the crankcase ventilators, or sludge in the oil pan. Besides looking for such signs, one can use a device called a "block tester." Ed said he bought one of these at a NAPA store and it diagnosed a cracked head in a car exhibiting the overheating-at-speed syndrome. Hot coolant is drawn into the tester, which has something in it that detects the presence of combustion gas, and shows this by a color change.

Other possible causes of overheating outside the cooling system are: (1) dragging brakes; (2) exhaust restriction; (3) late or retarded ignition timing; (4) late valve timing. These are easy enough to check for, and such checks should be made before one pulls the radiator out of one's car.

## TRY A SOLAR BATTERY CHARGER: LET THE SUN WORK FOR YOU!

By Charles Jekofsky (#524)

Most of us would welcome having a freebie - certainly those of us who were not born rich. If you are like me, you probably do not start your Buick daily; perhaps not even weekly; or even monthly during the winter period. All of this inactivity takes its toll on batteries. A phenomenon known as "self-discharge" normally occurs to batteries not being used, especially in winter. A "self-discharge" occurs more dramatically to fully charged batteries, much in the same way as depreciation occurs to new cars. I once read that batteries can lose 1-2% of charge each day they sit idle in cold weather. Naturally, older batteries would be prone to more pronounced losses under "self-discharge."

Further, the literature tends to discourage owners from running their engines for 10-15 minutes in the false hope that the electricity generated will form a full battery charge. Usually, all that happens is the formation of condensation from the heat of the engine that ultimately culminates in oxidation and rust to the under hood parts and exhaust system. A battery hydrometer test of each cell should yield a relatively accurate indication of the state of charge of your battery. Generally, a reading of 1.275 to 1.300 shows a specific gravity corresponding to a full charge (lower readings such as 1.225 are acceptable in tropical climates). A 1.225 reading indicates 50% charged (1.135 in the tropics), and less than 1.150 (1.045 in the tropics) indicates a discharged battery. All three cells should read similarly during hydrometer tests. Readings differing only 15 points (0.015) specific gravity between cells could indicate battery problems.

Battery chargers come in a variety of models. Some are "hot shot", some are "fast" chargers, while others are conventional and "trickle" chargers. There are even some automatic models that regulate the charge time to individual battery charging requirements. Without devoting an extensive discourse on the relative merits and drawbacks of the aforementioned units, let me just say that these devices generally have a rapid rise time and, unless specially regulated, settle down to the fall-back charge rate for the duration. A 100 ampere hour battery that is discharged may initially charge at 4-5 amps per hour and after several hours fall-back to a rate of 2 amp hours for the remainder of the charge time. Thus, 1-2 days may be necessary for the 2 amperes x 48 hours = 96 amp hours to fully recharge your battery. Using a conventional battery charger to maintain "self-discharging" batteries would have to be successfully employed every month.

This past winter, I located a calculator power supply rated at 6 volts at a 1 ampere maximum current draw. My Buick is stored in an unheated, detached garage several miles from my home. I brought the power supply to the garage and plugged it into the 110 volt wall socket and attached it to the battery. As we had several weeks of extremely cold weather, I did not want to suffer the indignity of finding a dead battery. It should be noted that when my Buick is not being driven, I always disconnect the battery cables in order to prevent possible battery discharge or a short circuit. So, my power supply was left alone to maintain a low, but constant charge on the battery during my absence. I found that in the first several minutes, the power supply was warm to the touch as the initial charging rate approached the 1 ampere limit. Thereafter, the fall-back rate of charge dropped the current draw back to several hundred milliamperes. Now that is trickle charging. While seemingly miniscule, the rate of charge produced during trickle is sufficient to maintain the needed charging rate to oppose "self-discharge." An additional by-product of trickle charging is the creation of sufficient internal activity to circulate electrolyte and prevent freezing (and eventual battery shell damage). Trickle charging will not subject the battery plates to the damage that may occur during conventional or "hot shot" charging.

After several weeks of trickle charging (I stopped in to survey the situation each week) I decided to start the engine. Immediately after flipping the steering column switch, I noticed vastly improved power, which was heard when the electrical fuel pump began



clicking. The clicks were faster and stronger than I noticed during previous summer starts. After carburetor priming, starting was a breeze as the big engine came to life after only 2-3 cranks. This method saves battery reserve and keeps starter effort and heat to a minimum. Non-electric fuel pump equipped Buicks should enjoy improved starting ease as a result of trickle charging.

As time progressed, I started having doubts about my calculator power supply because my application placed the unit in a continuous duty cycle mode. I also did not relish leaving this unattended arrangement plugged in to the 110 volt power outlet for long periods of time. I pondered such negative outcomes as short circuiting, blackouts (which may discharge the battery via its own charger) and (ugh!) fire. All of this redirected my thinking toward a less hazardous alternative.

Enter the solar charger (after all, isn't that what this article is supposed to be about?). I have been using a 12-volt solar charger in my other car for about six months. Engine starting is instantaneous and strong. I had casually looked for 6-volt versions of my solar charger, and had even considered using some electronic circuits to convert a 12-volt unit to 6 volts. But, as with all other projects, I was waiting to get a round tuit (get it?).

As I was paging through several science magazines, I chanced to observe an ad for solar chargers available in 6, 12, and 24 volts. Solar chargers can be ordered with cigarette lighter plugs or small alligator clips. The 6-volt model I purchased comes with alligator clips, though you could easily purchase a cigarette lighter plug and effect an adequate conversion. In my situation, I had to mount the charger external to the Buick, and would be connecting directly to the battery (as my battery cables are disconnected anyway). After inspecting the garage, I realized that with no windows, my only access to the outside was via a small hole near the peak of the roof. I sealed the solar charger in a weatherproof plastic case, and made provision for the wire to exit the case (always keep wires on the downside to prevent water from seeping in). Cable ties were used to secure the case. I ran a 14 gauge solid strand cable through the cable ties and used same to anchor the unit to a shingle on the other side of the peak. Hopefully, this will prevent the unit from blowing down. I then led in the 8-foot charger wire back into the garage. I thoughtfully obtained some 14 gauge stranded wire to add the needed length to reach the Buick battery. This additional wire was solder-tinned at one end (where they are attached to the solar charger clips) and fitted with full-size battery jumper wire clamps on the other end to attach to the battery lugs.

With the solar charger on the roof, facing south, I checked my installation with a VOM (volt-ohm-milliammeter), though any voltmeter will do. Needless to say, I was delighted when the meter needle deflected to indicate the presence of DC (not Washington) voltage. My final duty was to place the clamps on the battery. As I gently closed the hood, I was able to permit the wire to exit through the upper grille opening without being pinched. Having a '38 gives me a slight advantage over '37 owners as my battery is in the engine compartment. The solar charger, according to its literature, produces 30-45 milliamps current. Note that this is intended only to prevent "self-discharge" and is not sufficient to charge low or dead batteries. Further, the charger is equipped with a diode that prevents nocturnal discharging. The dimensions are 6 inches by 3 inches by 3/8 inch thick. Weight is approximately 1 pound with the wire.

Provided below is the information needed to order your charger. Additional data and ordering information may be obtained by calling 1-(417) 866-2213:

The Chaslyn Company  
1908 E. Meadowmere  
Springfield, MO 65804

Order model 6A (6 volt) - \$25.00 each - check or money order, add \$2.00 shipping and handling - allow 2-4 weeks for delivery.

## "ACCESSORIES" & "OPTIONS"

A member's questions discussed in another part of this issue prompted me to again consider the question of "accessories" or "options" — or perhaps more precisely, non-standard items or features: that is, things not found on every car turned out, or things substituted for "regular" items. This is somewhat more confusing than might be supposed.

The word "accessory" has several meanings. In general, it may be thought of as something extra, and in particular respecting automobiles, as an item, usually demountable or replaceable, added for purposes of enhanced comfort, safety, convenience, or beauty. Here we will confine ourselves to "factory-approved" accessories: that is, items installed at a Buick assembly plant, or distributed by Buick or General Motors to new car dealers for sale to car purchasers or owners. We will also exclude items not intended to be physically attached to the car in a more-or-less permanent way — e.g., waxes, radiator flushes, and the like, although there were "factory-approved" versions of such items.

A fair reading of the literature I have seen indicates that there were "standard" accessories and "special" accessories, and other things more properly called "options." Although I have found nothing so stating, it appears that "standard" accessories were routinely put on all cars (or all cars of particular series) at the factory and their cost included in the "delivered" price. However, it was presumably possible to special-order a car without one or more of the standard accessories, at a lower price. The advertised prices stated in terms of "as low as \$ \_\_\_\_\_ FOB Flint", or something similar, were probably prices of cars without the standard accessories. That is, standard accessories were, in part at least, a pricing gimmick.

Standard accessories included some items that we would consider close to essential, and some that were clearly only "dress-up." Let's look at a March 1938 price card from Glidden Buick in New York City — "Buick's Largest Dealer for 28 years." (Unfortunately, my copy is too fuzzy to reproduce.) This lists a price for each model, both "5 wheel" and "6 wheel", and "regular" and "with radio". There is a list of "Standard Accessories Included in Price." This includes, for all series, the following: bumpers and bumper guards; spare tire and tube; electric dash watch; chrome wheel rings; license plate frames; flexible steering wheel; and special gear shift knob. In addition, there were whitewall tires for all convertibles and all 90 series cars and rear compartment "watches" for all 90 series cars and the 81-F. The flexible steering wheel means the chrome-and-plastic "banjo" wheel, as distinguished from the brown hard rubber wheel; what the "special" knob was, as distinguished from non-special knobs, I do not know.

Standard accessories apparently varied somewhat from market to market. Let's look now at a similar 1938 price card for Pittsburgh. This does not break down "accessories", but simply lists "equipment" included in the price. This is similar to, but not the same as, the New York City "standard accessory" list. Of particular note: the models 46 (business coupe), 44, and 47 (plain-back sedans), it says, "are not equipped with safety [i.e. 'flexible'] steering wheel, electric dash clock [not 'watch'], chrome wheel rings, DeLuxe heater, or chrome license plate frames." With the foregoing exceptions, all Pittsburgh cars had DeLuxe heaters, and 60, 80 and 90 series cars had defrosters. In New York City, heaters and defrosters were "special accessories" (discussed below). Another example of market variation in "equipment" is the heavy-duty oil-bath air cleaner. These were put on all cars delivered in "dusty territories" — presumably, the Southwest and the High Plains, or parts thereof — and were thus a "standard accessory" in those markets. Climate and terrain, and probably affluence and taste of the customers as well, dictated variations in the way cars were routinely equipped and sold.



A portion of the "Factory-Approved Quality Accessories" listed from the 1928-1938 Master Chassis Parts Book. (Consumable items such as wax, sponges, etc. have been omitted.) "Moulding" refers to wheel trim rings.

## BUICK FACTORY-APPROVED QUALITY ACCESSORIES

Group	Part No.	Part Name	Models	List Price
9.650	980566	Radio, Centerline Model .....	1938	\$59.75
	980567	Radio, Centerline Dual Model.....	1938	67.50
8.845	980573	Hot Water Heater, DeLuxe Model.....	1938	18.95
	980574	Hot Water Heater, Master Model .....	1938	13.95
1.175	985113	GM Anti-Freeze (gal. can).....		1.00
	985114	GM Anti-Freeze (qt. can).....		.25
9.779	980575	Dual Defroster (when using 980573-4 Heaters).....	1938	8.85
	980576	Dual Defroster (when using 980573-4 Heaters).....	1937	9.50
	980559	Dual Defroster (when using 980530-1 Heaters).....	1937	8.85
5.871	980461	Moulding (Single) .....	1934-35-60-90; 1936-37-38-40-80-90	2.00
	980510	Moulding (Single) .....	1936-37-38-60	2.00
9.550	980577	DeLuxe Moderne Seat Cover, Front (4-door).....	1938-40-60	8.40
	980578	DeLuxe Moderne Seat Cover, Rear (4-door).....	1938-40-60	6.55
	980579	DeLuxe Moderne Seat Cover, Front (2-door).....	1938-40-60	8.40
	980580	DeLuxe Moderne Seat Cover, Rear (2-door).....	1938-40-60	6.55
	980581	DeLuxe Moderne Seat Cover, Rear (4-door).....	1938-60	9.35
	980582	DeLuxe Moderne Seat Cover, Front .....	1938-81-87-90-91	10.50
	980583	DeLuxe Moderne Seat Cover, Rear .....	1938-81-87-90-91	14.00
	980584	DeLuxe Moderne Seat Cover, Rear .....	1938-90-90L	14.00
	980585	DeLuxe Moderne Seat Cover, Rear .....	1938-91	14.00
7.828	980586	Grille Guard .....	1938	1.85
	980587	DeLuxe Grille Guard .....	1938	2.95
	980552	Front Center Guard .....	1936-37	2.25
	980568	Rear Center Guard .....	1938	2.95
1.174	980570	Twin Grille Covers .....	1938	1.35
1.266	980571	Invisible Bug Screen .....	1938	.95
	980562	Invisible Bug Screen .....	1937	.95
9.772	1304511	Electric Watch (for dash compartment).....	1938	12.25
9.709	980569	Automatic Cigar Lighter .....	1938	2.25
3.772	982088	Exhaust Pipe Trim .....	All Models	1.00
9.777	980532	License Plate Frames (1 set).....	1933 to 1938 inclusive	2.45
15.294	983541	Rear Compartment Shelf Mat (for 5-wheel jobs) .....	1937-38-41-44-47-48-61-67-68	2.25
9.773	982104	GM Fog Lamp (with attaching parts).....	All Models	5.50
9.988	980572	Rear Compartment Light .....	1938	1.25
9.773	601521	GM Safetylite .....	All Models	14.50
8.792	985292	Windshield Washer .....	1938	4.75
8.778	985194	Glare Shield .....	All Models	1.00
10.185	985236	Peep Mirror .....	1935-36-37-38	1.50
10.195	985268	Visor Vanity Mirror .....	1937-38	1.00

We may now return to the New York City card, which lists "Special Accessories and Equipment at Additional Cost." Among these, as noted above, are heaters and defrosters, but also "special paint-factory" at \$40.90, rear compartment "watch" for the 81 and 80-C (\$15.25), and the 40-series "Self-Shifting Transmission" at \$102.25. Paint and transmissions should, I think, be properly called "options" rather than "accessories", as they are demountable or replaceable only by major restructuring of the car.

Then we have the list of "Factory-Approved Accessories" in the '28-'38 Master Parts Book. This includes radios, heaters, defrosters, grille guards, fog lamps, seat covers, and many other items. It omits, however, the '38 front bumper "monogram" (see discussion elsewhere herein) and no doubt some other items as well. Now look at the 1938 price memo reproduced on pages 24 and 25 of Issue 6. As noted therein, this has items in it that I have seen in no other lists. Most of them are real "options," rather than "add-on" items.

The subject of accessories and options, as well as authenticity generally, will remain at least somewhat mysterious for some time to come, and perhaps for all time. Each time I see a new list of "equipment" it seems to vary to some extent from every other list I've seen. There are in many cases no single definitive answers to the questions: "is that correct?" or "what's that supposed to look like?".



## BUICK MASTER PARTS LIST



### NEW KLAXON HORNS

Add New Smartness to Older Model Cars

#### ROAD COMMANDER AERLECTRIC



A warning signal that truly is a COMMANDER of the road. On the country highway it has a powerful note for high-speed driving. In city traffic a touch of the horn button gives only a suggestion of its full volume and warns without irritating. Projectors of different lengths, with which the power plants are carefully synchronized, are used to produce the blended note. Mounting is under the hood to preserve the unbroken streamlines of present-day cars and to make possible the use of longer projectors which are necessary to give the signal its characteristic tone.

	Part No.	List Price
<b>Tie Rod Mounting</b> —Matched set (relay included) 6 volt.....	<b>1857457</b>	<b>\$10.95</b>
<b>Dash Mounting</b> —Matched set, 6 volt....	<b>1859086</b>	<b>11.95</b>

A very interesting accessory pictured in the 1928-1938 Master Parts Book is the Klaxon Road Commander Aerlectric Horn, which could be mounted on the brace bars under the hood (called "tie rod" in the book). I would dearly love to have one of these, but have never seen one anywhere.





EDITOR'S NOTE: In Issue 6 we had an article by Clint Preslan respecting tool kits, in which it was noted that the Buick tools were manufactured by Vlcheck Tool Company of Cleveland, Ohio. Here is a postscript, if you will, to that article. In addition to the second article, Clint presented to me, at the BCA National, an 11-inch adjustable wrench almost exactly similar to the Vlcheck wrenches pictured in Issue 6 but without the "VT" logo. When I arrived home from the National, I found a whole box of tools similar to those shown in the first article but again (with one exception) without identifying marks, sent to me by Mike Braden (#572) from Montana. (The exception is a ball-peen hammer which is marked "VLCHECK" across one side of the head; the wrench given to me by Clint -- for which he paid, incidentally, all of \$2.00 -- is marked "Made in U.S.A. 11 Auto", the "11" referring to its length in inches.) Mike has a collection of vintage tools, and can probably help out a few members who may need an item or two.

## TOOL TALES II

By Clint Preslan (#461)

Here is some further information concerning the Vlcheck Tool Co. of Cleveland, Ohio: Vlcheck is pronounced "VIL-check" according to my brother-in-law, Ed Knotek. In his younger days, Ed was a New York Central brakeman and used to set out cars on the Vlcheck sidetrack. Ed says Vlcheck tools were quality products.

The rest of my information comes from The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Indiana University Press, 1987 (p. 1014). The Vlcheck Tool Co. was founded in 1895 by Frank J. Vlcheck, a Czech immigrant. Originally a blacksmith operation, Vlcheck began making heavy-duty wrenches and hammers about the turn of the century. In the early 1900's Vlcheck became a major supplier of standard equipment tool kits to the young auto industry.

During World War I, Vlcheck was the exclusive manufacturer of tool kits for the U.S.-built Liberty aircraft engine. Frank Vlcheck was often praised as the "Henry Ford of the tool industry" for innovative mass production in his tool plant on Cleveland's East 87th Street.

During World War II, Vlcheck made tools for the U.S. military, yet devoted 25% of its production to civilian tools. By 1941, Vlcheck Tool Co. "supplied 85% of all tool kits included in new cars, plus an additional 20,000 tools per day for distribution to hardware stores, mail order companies, and tool suppliers in the automotive and agricultural implement fields."

In the late 1950's Vlcheck was bought out by Pendleton Tool Industries of California, a huge producer of hand tools. In 1964, Pendleton merged with Ingersoll-Rand. In 1969, Ingersoll-Rand closed the old Vlcheck plant and moved its tool operations out of Cleveland.

The January 1, 1947 Buick Chassis Parts Manual has no listing for "8.821 Kit, Tool." Perhaps Harlow Curtice decided to save money on tool kits as well as jacks, eliminating tool kits in postwar production. Or it may be that Buick decided that the "modern" car owner didn't need or couldn't use them, or that including tools tended to convey an unfavorable image of the cars: i.e., that they might need repairs. In any event, it seems that Buick tool kits vanished in 1942 or 1946.



Here's another little mystery. This photo was taken in the late 1930s, and shows one of those crazy buildings that were popular at that time. Where is it? What's the car approaching the intersection? (A hint, if one is necessary: there's doubtless a lot more traffic at this location today.) (Photo courtesy of John Breen #533)







# QUESTIONS



The following questions all come from one self-confessed novice and first-time antique car owner, who apologized for their being perhaps trivial or elementary. I was once told by a long-time member who gets many questions: "You can't make it too elementary." It is difficult to judge the level of sophistication prevailing among the readers, and I have tried to aim at a sort of middle ground, and to avoid either unduly bewildering the novice and boring the cognoscenti. I assume this has been at least partially successful, as there has not been any groundswell of complaint. However, it is perhaps time we bent a bit in the beginners' direction; presumably, after all, they need the most help.

Sometimes things that appear elementary turn out not to be such when they are looked at closely. Sometimes the reader who believes he (or she) may have posed a "dumb question" has actually poked into a Pandora's Box of mysteries that have baffled the experts. So perhaps there are no, or very few, trivial questions.

Question. Could you show a photo or drawing of the actual Buick tool mark on the original tools (Issue 6, pp. 21-33), so I know what I'm looking for.

Answer. The photo in Issue 6 is the only one I have, and I don't have any samples of the tools. The photo was taken several years ago by Dave Lewis during a brief period when the tools were in his possession. It is likely that the marking is the "Buick" script-on-a-square, but it could be another of the several "logos" that were used in the 1930s. You will find these logos scattered throughout the pages of each Torque Tube issue. It would not be a shield like the "VT" Vlcheck Tool logo. If you find anything with any Buick logo, buy it.

Question. Did 1938 jacks have any type of marking? What color were they?

Answer. I have never seen a "Buick" marking on this jack, but it is probable that there were variations in them. They may be marked "Auto Specialties Manufacturing Company" or an abbreviation of that. Some appear to have been painted black originally, but a '38 Dave Lewis is currently working on has a bright green jack. This seems to be original, and it is unlikely that anyone would have repainted a jack in such a color. The green is roughly the shade used on "Lawn Boy" mowers.

Question. Did all '38s have the center "Buick 8" front bumper emblem?

Answer. This is not as easy as it sounds, but the Editor's considered opinion is "no." The emblem is listed in the main body of the 1928-1938 Master Chassis Parts Book (7.840, "Monogram, front car bumper"), and is not in the book's list of "Buick Factory-Approved Accessories." Moreover, it is shown in Buick sales literature on cars that are pictured from the front. This suggests that the emblem was a standard feature. However, the main text of the Master Parts Book lists other items that were not "standard" — i.e. found on all cars manufactured and sold — and sales literature is typically unreliable as to authenticity — at least when it comes to pictures. Buick ads for 1938 show 40-series cars both with and without the emblem. Compare the ads on the covers of Vol. VII, Nos. 2 and 5. (The former ad shows a car with whitewall tires, sidemounts, trim rings, and the emblem, and stresses performance; the latter, aimed at farmers, shows a car with black tires, no trim rings, and no emblem, and stresses economy and durability.) A Buick

publicity photo of a '38 Limited shows the emblem, but photo ads picturing Limiteds and Roadmasters show cars without it. Other ads for both 40 and 60-series cars show some with and some without. A fair number of restored '38s are seen today without the emblem, and most '38 owners think of it as an "option."

You didn't ask, but might have, "what color were they?" There is some uncertainty here. Paul Cusano (#52), who has made a very careful study of authenticity, maintains, based upon an apparently-original example, that "BUICK" and the diagonal line are red and the "8" is black. However, some sales literature shows "BUICK" black and the diagonal line and "8" red. (The background or indented portion surrounding "BUICK" is painted, not the letters themselves.) It is quite possible that both schemes were used; perhaps one is "early" and the other "late."

**Question.** What about driving lights? Standard or an option? What color should the lenses be?

**Answer.** All '37 and '38 Buicks had two headlamps, two front fender lights, two tail lights with twin-filament bulbs, and a license plate light (combined with the left tail light on coupes), as they came from the factory. All other exterior lights are "add-ons," or optional accessories. "Driving" or "booster-beam" or "passing" lamps had clear lenses; "fog" lamps had amber lenses. What was, and is, "added on" was, and is, a matter of the owner's choice. A reproduction of the 1928-1938 Master Chassis Parts Book's description of "Guide" booster-beam and fog lamps is included in this issue. "Guide" was the GM line of accessory lamps.



## BUICK MASTER PARTS LIST



### GUIDE FOG LAMP

**For Safe Night Driving in Any Kind of Weather—The Leader in . . . Appearance - Construction - Performance**

The new and improved Guide Fog Lamp is designed to enable passenger and commercial vehicles to travel at night in fog, sleet or snow with maximum road visibility and safety. Its penetrating amber ray provides better illumination than the ordinary headlamp beam in fog or storm. Hazardous reflection from moisture particles is eliminated by correct distribution of the powerful beam of the Guide Fog Lamp, by means of the special optical lens, prefocused bulb and special bulb shield.

The silver-plated mirror reflector of the Guide Fog Lamp multiplies the bulb candlepower many thousand times and the lens distributes this powerful beam with the proper light pattern to prevent glare and insure maximum illumination for inclement weather driving.

The installation of two lamps is strongly recommended. In heavy fog, both fog lamps should be turned on and headlamps switched off for best possible results.

Heavy brass construction is used in the Guide Fog Lamp, with steel reinforcing plate, insuring dependable service and long life on trucks, buses and passenger cars. The body and door are chrome-plated and the mounting bracket is finished in black enamel.

The special mounting bracket has a 360 degree rotation feature, which permits turning in any direction, to avoid interference with fenders, bumper guards or radiator grilles. The lamp can be mounted above or below the bumper as desired.

Included in the fog lamp package is a heavy duty push-pull switch with a clamp-on bracket. The improved design of the switch eliminates the possibility of short-circuiting.

Guide Fog Lamp is furnished complete with bracket, switch, extra long weatherproof cable and detailed installation data.

Packed individually—weight 5½ pounds. Standard shipping carton contains six (6) lamp packages.



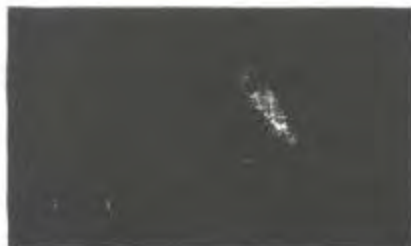
FOG LAMP  
No. 921672  
Price \$5.50



# GUIDE BOOSTER BEAM DRIVING AND PASSING LAMP



DRIVING LAMP  
No. 921750  
Price \$5.50



Night driving with day-time safety is possible with Guide Booster Beam Driving and Passing Lamps. These lamps can be operated in conjunction with the "driving" and "passing" beams of the regular headlights and may also be operated independently by separate switches provided with each lamp.

The driving lamp throws a concentrated controlled beam down the highway, picking out turns, signs or possible obstructions, beyond the range of the headlamps.

The passing lamp lights up the right-hand side of the road clearly when using lower beam of headlamps in approaching and passing oncoming

cars, avoiding possibility of accident due to blinding glare or insufficient illumination. Either lamp may be installed separately, if desired, but the use of both lamps is recommended for most satisfactory results.

The Booster Beam lamps are of the same quality and rugged construction as the Guide Fog Lamp, shown above. They are also provided with the same 360 degree universal mounting bracket, switch, extra long waterproof cable, and complete installation data.

Packed individually—weight 5½ pounds. Standard carton contains six (6) lamp packages.



PASSING LAMP  
No. 921751  
Price \$5.50

U. M. S.— Page 230 —SECTION

Question. This may sound really dumb, but which way is the bumper supposed to go on. Does the longer "bump" (projection on the end) go on the top or the bottom?

Answer. Maybe not so dumb. The slightly longer of the two semi-circular projections on the end of the bumper is correctly positioned uppermost (i.e. on top). Apparently this is not universally adhered to, as I have seen more than one car with its bumpers on upside-down. (Race to your garages, folks! Is it your car?)

Question. Is there supposed to be a layer of gasket material between the intake manifold and the carburetor? If so, how are you supposed to stop the air cleaner from denting the hood?

Answer. Naughty air cleaners that dent hoods have been found to have histories of childhood psycho-trauma compounded by metabolic enzyme deficiencies. Some individuals may be restored to normal social interaction by a course of training at one of the approved Air Cleaner Obedience and Discipline Boot Camps: watch these pages for an announcement of the next session. Incurable cleaners must be institutionalized.

Seriously, there is something wrong here. Yes, there are several layers of gasket material between the manifold throat and the carburetor base. Typically, these are stapled together. If the hood hits the top of the air cleaner when closed, (a) you have too many layers; or (b) you have the wrong carburetor; or (c) you have the wrong air cleaner; or (d) some or all of the above. The correct carburetor for a '38 40-series car is either the Stromberg AAV-1 or the Marvel CD-1. (There are few Marvels left, as they were troublesome.) Many cars in "as found" condition will have 1940s Buick carburetors, Carter WCD series or later Stromberg AAV series, but these usually fit without clearance problems.

If you take off too many layers of gasket material, you may have trouble with the choke fitting over the manifold "stove," but if a few layers less solves the problem, fine. If some of the layers are stapled together and some not, it is likely the latter were added for some reason — probably a bad one. Make sure your air cleaner fits down over the carburetor air horn correctly. Buick regular and heavy-duty air cleaners are shown below.



Fig. 6-55. Air Cleaner, Regular—Series 40

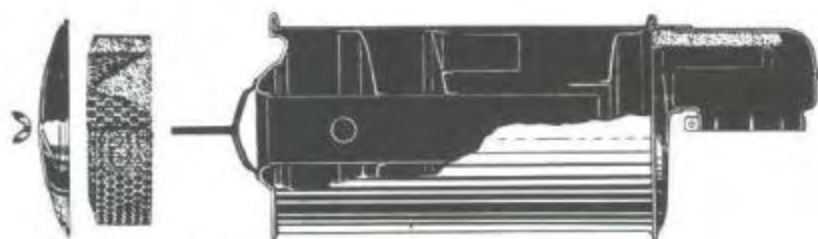


Fig. 6-56. Air Cleaner, Regular—Series 60-80-90

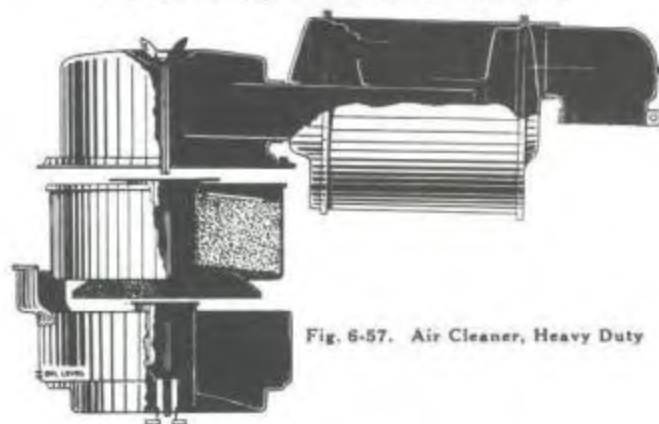


Fig. 6-57. Air Cleaner, Heavy Duty

Question. What color are the hood louvers?

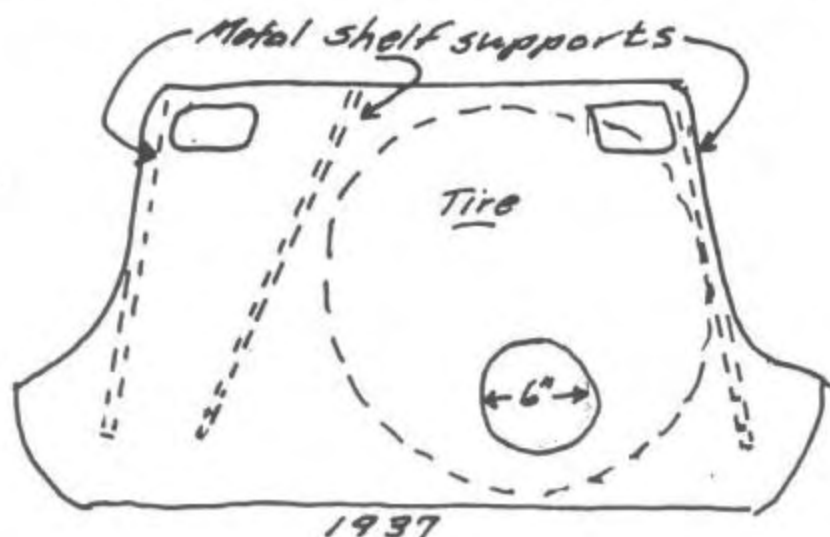
Answer. The louvers are a sort of dull silver-gray set off by stainless steel trim. I would mix a bit of light gray into silver paint, if you want to mix your own. (The official name of the color was "Roi Grey" — this was also used as a wheel stripe color.) Dave Lewis uses DuPont Centari 5580A — Silver Metallic. (The interior of the louvers — i.e. the part inside the hood — may be painted black.)

Question. What is the inside of the trunk supposed to look like?

Answer. There is a burlap-like material, edged with vinyl, glued to the inside walls on either side. The precise color and pattern are not now clear, and there probably were variations in actual production. Bob's Automobilia sells a trunk interior fabric that is a good substitute for the original. (See Bob's ad in this issue.) This must be cut to size and edge-bound with brown vinyl by an upholstery shop. The back of the rear seat, or back wall of the trunk, was covered with black or brown heavy cardboard, held in place by screws. A finishing washer under each screw head keeps the heads from pulling through. The floor was covered with a black felt, similar to the roofing felt used today, but about 1/8" thick. On five-wheel cars, the spare tire and wheel were on the trunk floor, and they were covered by a plywood shelf supported by metal brackets. The spare tire was positioned by wood blocks. (5/8" plywood is about right.) The shelf, or tire board, was shaped to fit the inside of the trunk. On '37 models there were two cutouts near the inner corners. On both '37 and '38 there is a hole approximately 6" in diameter, located slightly off-center. When the tire is put in against the right-hand wall, with the tire valve toward



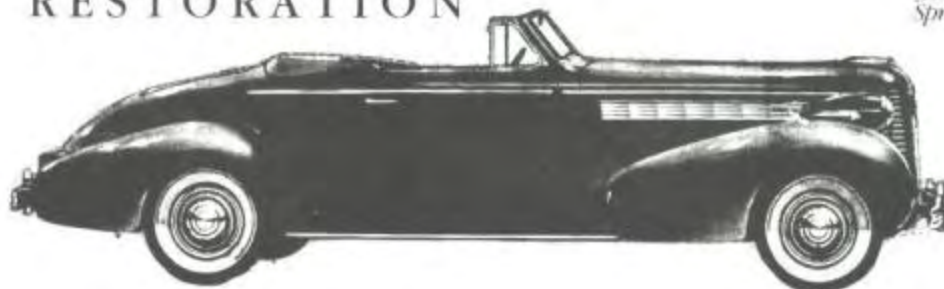
the rear of the car, the valve will be under the hole. The hole enables one to push the tire out, and to check the air without taking the tire out of the car. The shelf was painted a sort of taupe or brownish color. Dealers sold accessory rubber mats that covered either: (a) the shelf, on five-wheel cars; or (b) the trunk floor, on six-wheel cars. These mats were similar in color and design to the 40 and 60-series front floor mats. They came in a variety of sizes, to fit various models. These mats are not obtainable today.



**Question.** Was the window shade in the back window a standard feature? What color were they?

**Answer.** I believe these were a standard feature on sedans. The '37 Special I once owned had one. This was a model 47 and had obviously been a "Plain Jane": no radio, no heater, no trim rings, no dash clock, hard rubber steering wheel. If this car had a window shade, it seems a safe bet that all sedans had them. (Although the evidence is unclear, I do not think they were found on coupes.) The shade was very much like a house window shade. It was wound around a spring-loaded wood roller, which was attached to the shelf behind the rear seat by chrome-plated brackets. A little hook was screwed into the body framing above the rear window. The shade was pulled up and attached to the hook. I believe the shades to have been thin cotton — not paper. The surviving examples are sufficiently faded that color identification is difficult. They may have matched the interiors, but the only ones I have seen are gray. These are frequently missing from cars and are very hard to find, and many restorers don't bother about them.

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BUICK TORQUE BALL SEAL KITS, include shim gaskets, cork packing, instruction sheet and a tube of silicone. Will fit 1937-38 all series. \$29.95 postpaid. (NJ residents, add 6% sales tax.) Send check or money order with name and address; year and series of car. Please allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.

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TOM ALDERINK (#735)  
619 W.23 St.  
Holland, MI 49423

616/396-3183  
616/392-1761

'37 series 40 used carb, AA-1 Stromberg, needs rebuild- \$50; '37-'38 series 60 rear brake drums freshly turned- \$20 each; '37-'38 series 40 & 60 NOS front shock (left)- \$50. Shipping extra. BOB PIPKIN (76) 2516 62nd SE, Salem, OR 97301. 503/363-4712.

'37-'38 front rubber floor mat, taupe with padding, series 40 & 60, unused repro from Bob's- \$125; '38 left tail light housing w/lens- \$25; '38 steering column & box, series 40 & 60- \$45; '37-'38 Master Heater- \$25; '37-'38 jack w/base- \$25; Tripp Junior lights w/brackets convex lens, pair- \$95. CURT BROHARD (554). 1084 Gardenia Terrace, Alameda, CA 94501. 415/521-4299.

1938 Parts: Rebuilt pressure plate, ser 60, 80, 90- \$65; new clutch disk, ser. 60, 80, 90- \$35; starter with solenoid (very good), ser. 60, 80, 90- \$100; radiator, ser. 60, 80, 90, cleaned out & tested- \$225; parking light parts- make offer; tail lights (complete w/lens base & lens retainer)- \$75; horn button- \$25; headlight switch knob (good)- \$10; Cigar lighter-dash (plastic is good)- \$20. Call DAVID BYLSMA (#117) in Maryland, 5 PM to 9 PM Mon.-Fri. or anytime Sat. & Sun. Eastern Time. 301/551-7236.

'34-'38 ser. 40 exhaust manifold- freight cost; '38 thermostat housing w/check valve- \$15 (ser. 40); handle potpourri: '37 early locking handle, no lock or lock mechanism, '37-'38 sedan trunk



handle, small bag of misc. lock stuff- \$10 lot; '38 automatic choke- \$45; sidemount lock, Briggs & Stratton, looks same as lock plate #23 shown in Vol. V, No. 7. 1 1/2" bore- \$30. TONY WEISS (#647). 3402 181 Pl., NE, Redmond, WA 98052. 206/883-8893.

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TOM ALDERINK (#735) has some '37 80-series stuff for sale, but I did not get his list in time for this issue. Call him to find out about it. 616/392-1761

## PARTS WANTED

'37 sun visor mounting bracket (driver side). BOB LA SCALA (#834) R-24, Lake Lotawana, MO 64063.

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'38 series 40: transmission; wiper transmissions; radio; horn ring; Century rear end gears. STEVE LAMB (#813). 403 Ventura St., Altadena, CA 91001. 818/797-0962.

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## CARS FOR SALE



'37 model 61 with sidemount fenders & covers, missing engine & transmission. '37 model 46, no fenders, engine or transmission. Both for \$1000. GLEN BORCHARDT (#701). 824 19th St., Windom, MN 56101. 507/831-2480.

---

Benny the Buick needs a new home. '37 Special model 47 plain-back 4-door. Overall, a complete, decent-running, working car. 265000 miles; 90% re-wired; new radiator core; new exhaust system; original upholstery needs some work; new WW tires; good brakes; body needs paint & work in trunk. Asking \$3800. One too many cars! GENE ZEMAN (#754). (3rd owner) 1608 Zilka Ave. NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405. 319/396-8666 (PM)

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'37 model 48, Special 2-door trunk back. Rough but original & 90% complete. Mostly disassembled. Engine partly rebuilt. Good fenders & grille. Chrome fair. Body is generally solid but floor & trunk are rusted. Good parts car, or restorable by someone more capable than I. Prefer to sell entire car. \$1000 invested. Please make me an offer; I don't want it to go to the street-rod guys. TOM TIBBLE (#793). 6100 N. 14th St., Kalamazoo, MI 49007. 616/381-6202 (PM).

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## CARS WANTED

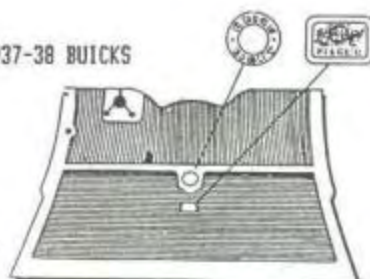
'37-'38 Century sedan with rust-free straight body. 99% complete & non-running OK. All calls & letters answered. ROLAND BLEITZ (#580). 29084 Poppy Meadow St., Canyon Country, CA 91351. 805/251-6360.

---

'37-'38 coupe any model. DSM. Prefer '37 with R/S. Good to excellent. Write BOB HAMRO (#775). 3241 Williams Rd., San Jose, CA 95117 with price, etc.

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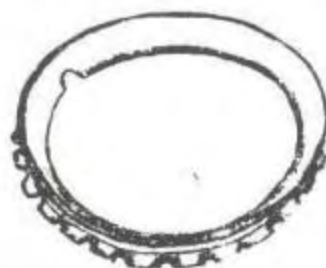
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1937-38 WIPER ARM. WA-360 \$15 EA. BLADES WB-8 \$4EA.

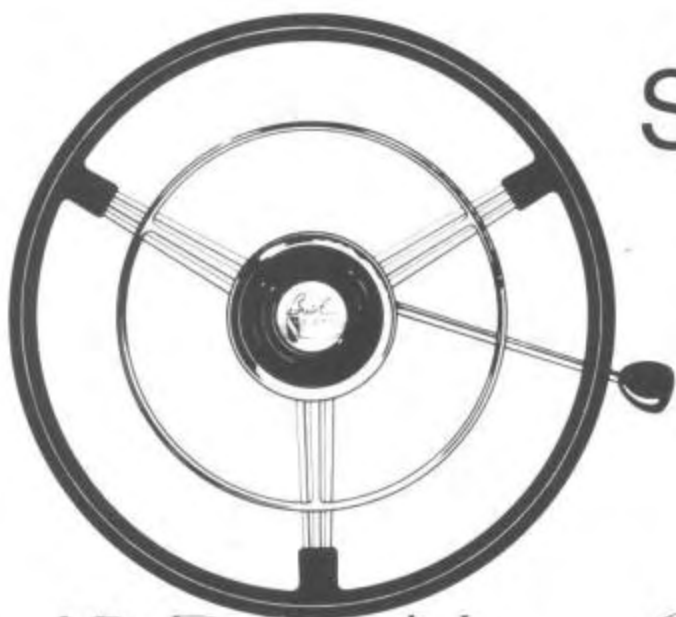


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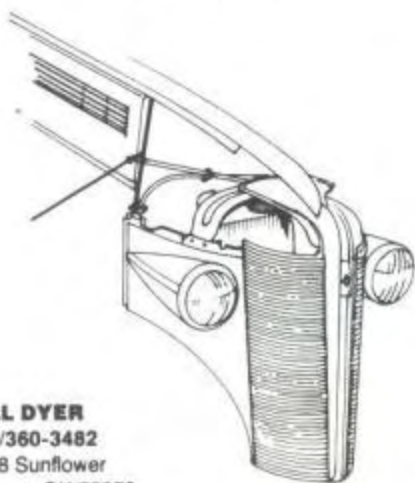
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